

Remarks at a Reception for Representative Corrine Brown in Jacksonville October 4, 2000

The President. Now, listen, we're going to forgive you for that minor election year exaggeration. [Laughter] Let me tell you folks, were you all—you weren't in the rally, were you?

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. Well, we had a good one, and I thank you for making it possible. I just want to say more briefly what I said in there. I am grateful to the people of Florida for the opportunity they've given to me and Hillary and to our administration to serve. The first victory I won, of any kind, running for President was the December 1991 straw poll at the Florida Democratic Convention, and I'm very grateful.

We almost won here in '92 and spent no money. And I had a big fight within our own camp. I kept telling them, "We can win in Florida." So when we didn't win in '92, I said, "There will be no debate in '96. We're going all out." In the meanwhile, of course, we had the Summit of the Americas here; we moved the Southern Command here; we saved the Everglades; we helped to bring the economy back; and we got a big victory in Florida in 1996. And what Corrine said was true: When it came on the television early on election eve that Bill Clinton and Al Gore had carried Florida, everybody said, "Katie bar the door. It's over," and all that. And I would like it if you would send that message again on the night of November 7th.

I also want to say that if I have been able to help our country, it's important to me that you understand that it wouldn't have been possible had it not been for the support of people like Alcee Hastings and Corrine Brown. And she has done a great job in Congress. She does deliver. As a matter of fact, she works me to death. [Laughter] When people see her coming in the White House, if she wants something, we finally decided just go on and tell her yes before we even hear what it is—[laughter]—because we know if we don't, we just know she'll wear us out until we're all exhausted, and we'll wind up saying yes anyway. [Laughter] So we just say yes on the front end now. [Laughter]

She has done a really good job for you, and she deserves to be reelected. And in a larger sense, her election and every election this year,

from anybody who has been involved in the last 8 years, is a decision by the people about whether to keep changing in the direction we're going or whether to turn back around and go back to where we were and change in another direction.

And I can only tell you again—I don't want to repeat everything I said out there, but there are huge differences. I thought the Vice President did an excellent job in that debate last night. I was very proud of him. But it's important to me that you understand that—like I said, I'm not running for anything. We've got another candidate in my house now—[laughter]—and she's going to win, I think. But it's important to me that you understand that everything that I have tried to do this last 8 years to turn the country around, to bring the country together, to get it moving forward, is sort of like setting the table for a banquet, but the banquet hasn't been held yet.

And I can give you—we're paying off the debt, but we're not debt-free. We've had the longest economic expansion in history, but it hasn't extended to everybody who's willing to work. We've reduced, just this last year, the number of uninsured people, for the first time in a dozen years, but there are still working families with children out there that need health insurance and senior citizens that need medicine.

We've got—the test scores in our schools are going up, and the dropout rate's going down, and the college-going rate is at an all-time high. There's been a huge increase, two-thirds, in the number of our kids taking advanced placement courses; 500 percent increase in the number of African-American children taking advanced placement courses for college in the last decade. But we're not anywhere near where we need to be yet.

So the question is, what is it that we propose to do? We've got the country turned around, pulled together, moving in the right direction. We're going to change. The question is, how are we going to change? And the point I've tried to hammer home—and I want to, by the way, before I go any further, I want to acknowledge the presence in the audience of somebody

else who hasn't been introduced here, your former Lieutenant Governor, my Special Envoy to the Americas, Buddy MacKay. I want to thank him for the great job he's done.

But there's a big difference in the Republican and Democratic economic approaches. You heard a little bit of it last night. But just to simplify, basically, they want a tax cut that's almost 3 times as big as ours, the one that the Vice President and Corrine support, and a partial privatization of Social Security, which would cost another trillion dollars to fund. And that's before they keep any of their spending promises. So that puts them into spending the Social Security money or into a deficit, the way we talk about it.

That's why the Vice President says, "I'd like to give you one that big, but I can't, not responsibly, because we've got to have money for education, for health care, and we've got to keep paying the debt down."

But what you should understand is, every time I go to one of these big-dollar fundraisers where we've got a bunch of rich people, I say, "Why are you for us? You know, if you go to them, he's going to give some of you millions. Why are you for us?" And I make them say what I'll say to you, what they always say is, "Because your deal worked. It's better to have low interest rates, where businesses can borrow money and expand, the stock market grows, people can be hired, incomes go up. And I'd rather pay a little more money on a higher income than less money on a lower income, where more people are working and the economy's growing." This is a huge, huge idea difference here.

You know, they really believe if you lower taxes, mostly on upper income people and you give them more money to invest, it will grow the economy, even if the Government's in deficit. We really believe that if you have a Government that's in deficit and you're growing the debt, you're going to have high interest rates; it's going to stagnate the economy; and nothing else is going to work very well; plus which low interest rates is the best middle class tax cut in the world.

I have an economic study which indicates that the difference between our plan and theirs would keep interest rates a percent lower for a decade. That's \$390 billion in lower home mortgages, \$30 billion in lower car payments, \$15 billion in lower college loan payments. That's a \$435 billion tax cut, in the form of

lower interest rates. And you get that for free by paying down the debt. So it's a huge choice. You've got to decide.

We have big differences in health care. We're for a Patients' Bill of Rights. They're not. We think all Americans ought to have—all seniors ought to have access to affordable, voluntary prescription drug coverage, and they don't. We think that this Children's Health Insurance Program, which has insured 2½ million kids, should be expanded to include the working parents of those kids. That would take care of 25 percent of all the people without health insurance in this country. It would also, by the way, dramatically alleviate the burden on hospitals today for uncompensated medical care.

We believe that families ought to have a long-term care tax credit to take care of their elderly or disabled family members. More and more people are doing that, and more and more people are going to have to do that because we're all living longer. If you live to be 65 in America, your life expectancy is 82. And with the human genome project—I said to a woman's group I just met with, and I'll tell you again—I believe that the young women who are still having kids, in this audience, within the next 10 years will be coming home with babies that will have a life expectancy of 90 years. But it means we have to plan for this; we have to prepare for this; we have to adjust our society for this.

So these are big differences. There are big health care differences. In education, both our sides are for accountability. I think our accountability plan is a little better than theirs, and I won't go into why now because you don't have all day to talk about it. But the difference is, in addition to accountability, we want to help people meet the standards.

So I'll just give you one example. When Al Gore started leading our efforts to hook all the classrooms and schools up to the Internet, 3 percent of the classrooms and 11 percent of the schools were connected. Today, 65 percent of the classrooms and 95 percent of the schools are connected to the Internet. We want to put 100,000 teachers out there, for smaller classes in the early grades, and make sure they're certified to teach what they're teaching, qualified.

We want to build—provide States with tax relief on school bonds to build 6,000 new schools or radically remodel them and to repair another 5,000 a year for 5 years—huge issue

in Florida. You've got people in all the house-trailers and coming out of the windows in these old schools, and there are more kids than ever before in the schools but a smaller percent of the parents owning property and being in the—elections than ever before. And I think—we've got the money; we ought to have some tax relief here and some direct funding to help repair these schools and modernize them. It's a big issue. I think it's important.

So, we're for that, and they're not. So there are big differences in the economy, health care, education; big differences in the environment; big differences in crime; big differences in how we go about living together on equal terms. We're for strengthening the equal pay for equal work law for women. We're for a hate crimes bill that covers everybody, and they're not.

So I believe, on all these issues, in addition to what Corrine does for the district, she's right, and they're not. That's what I believe. If you believe that and if you believe the same about the Presidential race, then it's very important that between now and election, you give her some more money if you can, because she's being outspent. But beyond that, you think about all the people you come in contact with every day who are your friends. Some are Democrats; some are Republicans; some are independents. Nearly every one of them intends to vote. Almost none of them come to things like this. Is that right? Most of your friends never come to events like this and would never have a chance to have an encounter like this.

So I think it's very important that in addition to everything else, if you just make up your mind that part of the duties of citizenship for you—since you came here, you heard this, you know something about it already, otherwise you wouldn't be helping her—is that every day between now and the election you're going to take a little time to talk to somebody. You might make the difference in whether they vote or

not. You might make the difference in the person they vote for.

Because the most important thing—I've always believed if the American people have enough time and enough information, they nearly always get it right. Otherwise, we wouldn't still be here as the oldest democracy in the world. We'd be on the ash can of history. We'd be history. And the reason we're still here doing better is, not necessarily—not primarily because of the leaders but primarily because people are pretty smart, and they're fundamentally good, and our system is fundamentally wise. And freedom works, but for it to work, people have to have enough information and enough time to digest it, and they have to understand what the differences are and the nature of their choice.

So the way I want you to think about this is: Confusion about the choice helps them; clarity about the choice helps us. I believe that with all my heart. I think if people say, "I want somebody that will meet the big challenges of the future. I want somebody that understands the future. I want somebody that supported the right kind of change in the past, and here are the choices before me in the economy and education and health care, the environment, crime, the whole 9 yards," we win, if they understand.

You can help that. So I want to ask you for her, for Al Gore and Joe Lieberman, for Bill Nelson, go out there and make sure people understand with clarity the choice before them. If you do, trust the people will have a great celebration the night of November 7th.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. in Boardroom A at the Prime Osborne Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Nelson, candidate for U.S. Senate in Florida. Representative Brown was a candidate for reelection in Florida's Third Congressional District.

Statement on Smaller Learning Communities Grants

October 4, 2000

I am pleased that today the U.S. Department of Education is awarding \$42.3 million in grants to help school districts create Smaller Learning

Communities in large high schools across the country. Nearly three-quarters of American high schools have more than 1000 students enrolled,